

Approved by the decision of the Academic Council of
THU No. 13 of December 30, 2024

LLC Tbilisi Humanitarian University

Code of Research Ethics

Chapter I. General Provisions

Article 1. General Provisions

1. LLC Tbilisi Humanitarian University (hereinafter referred to as the “University”) recognizes and adheres to international standards of academic integrity. The University, in accordance with its mission, attaches special importance to the realization of the principle of academic integrity and the establishment of appropriate ethical conduct in university life.
2. Academic activities, the process of teaching and research at the University are based on the internationally recognized values of academic integrity.
3. The Code of Research Ethics and Academic Integrity (hereinafter referred to as the Code) has been developed on the basis of the Organic Law of Georgia - the “Labor Code of Georgia”, the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education”, the Statute of the University and other legal acts.

Article 2. Purpose of the Code

1. The purpose of the Code is to promote the objective implementation of teaching and research at the University, the development of academic and scientific activities, academic freedom and impartiality, the introduction and establishment of international scientific standards, as well as the publication and review of international level works.
2. The Code is based on and protects the constitutional principle of academic freedom, ensures the establishment of academic honesty in academic activities, the process of teaching and research, the introduction of a free academic environment and high ethical standards in scientific and research activities.
3. The Code defines the criteria, principles and standards of research ethics in the academic activities of the University, in the process of teaching and research, the concept of academic integrity, forms of violation of research ethics and academic integrity and issues of prevention, transparent, consistent, impartial and fair procedures for detecting forms of violation of academic integrity, the procedure for responding to forms of violation of research ethics and academic integrity, the grounds for imposing disciplinary liability, proportionate and consistent measures of disciplinary liability, as well as the status, objectives, main principles of activity and powers of the Research Ethics Commission.

Article 3. Scope of the Code

The present Code applies to: University personnel (hereinafter referred to as “Personnel”) who, within the scope of their official duties, are authorized to create, publicize and/or publish products resulting from scientific, research and educational activities.

Article 4. Academic Freedom and Academic Integrity

1. Academic freedom is one of the main values of the University’s scientific research strategy. The University recognizes and protects the constitutional principle of academic freedom.
2. Academic integrity implies a person’s actions with the awareness of the values of honesty, trust, justice, respect and responsibility and with the belief that this action is most favorable for the academic space and goals.

Article 5. Criteria for determining research ethics

1. Scientific research implies logical thinking, reconciling theories and ideas, and formulating new opinions. Research is used to describe, explain and predict phenomena and includes the main components - testing hypotheses, observation and measurements, evaluation and analysis of the results obtained, and formulation of conclusions. Scientific research has one result - determining reality.
2. Scientific work carried out on behalf of and/or within the University must meet generally accepted specific requirements.
3. Scientific work carried out on behalf of and/or within the University must meet the main criteria determining research ethics: integrity, objectivity (intersubjectivity), significance, originality, conceptual and linguistic clarity, validity, transparency.
4. The researcher must verify all sources used and clearly demonstrate the principle of constructing the argument. Manipulation of data, their falsification and invention of results are not allowed in the process of scientific work.
5. Objectivity (intersubjectivity): Scientific work must be as neutral as possible and should not reflect the author's personal sympathies or attitude towards the research issue. The researcher's observations and arguments should be formulated in a businesslike and impartial manner based on logical reasoning.
6. Significance determines the creation of new knowledge in the field and the advancement of the discipline. Those works that are distinguished by high informativeness are significant, as well as studies that contribute to the solution/solution of specific practical problems.
7. Originality: The originality of a scientific work is achieved by creating a new concept, presenting an innovative scheme, establishing a new research model/method, or a new vision of solving a problem.
8. Clarity of thought and language: The language of a scientific work should be simple, unambiguous, and precise; sentences should be clearly constructed and not leave room for interpretations.
9. Validity: The paper should provide the ability to verify and refute the point of view put forward. It is important that the research problem in an academic paper is fully understood, scientific literature or other research tools are carefully selected, and their interrelationships are clearly presented.
10. Transparency: A scientific paper should not be based on assumptions, but on verified, reliable facts and data, and the arguments presented should be thoroughly and without error.

Article 6. Guiding Principles of Research Ethics

1. If research is conducted on behalf of and/or within the University, the researcher is obliged to follow the Guiding Principles of Research Ethics.
2. Research conducted on behalf of and/or within the University must be valuable.
3. In research conducted on behalf of and/or within the University, the protection and well-being of the persons participating in the research must be ensured so that the research participants do not suffer any harm or are not at risk of harm.
4. In research conducted on behalf of and/or within the University, the principle of informed consent must be observed. The researcher must provide any research participant with full information about the objectives of the research and all aspects of the research.
5. A research participant has the right to withdraw from the research and refuse to participate in it at any time, without any explanation or liability.
6. If the results of the research are to be published or otherwise made public, the researcher must inform all participants of the research and obtain their informed consent. In addition, if the research is confidential or anonymous, all participants of the research must be informed of this.
7. The principle of confidentiality must be observed in research conducted on behalf of and/or within the

university. Personal data must be accessible only to the research team, except in cases where the research participant agrees to the disclosure of personal data.

Article 7. Research Ethics Standards

If the research is conducted on behalf of and/or within the university, the researcher must:

- a. Provide the research participants with complete information about his/her own and institutional affiliation;
- b. Explain the research objectives and procedures in detail to the research participants before the research begins;
- c. Obtain informed consent from all participants of the research; d. Respect all agreements reached during the research process;
- e. Describe the terms and objectives of the research and provide this information to research participants in writing;
- f. Disclose any current or potential conflicts of interest and conduct their research in accordance with recognized standards of academic integrity.

Chapter II. Certain Types of Violations of Academic Integrity

Article 8. Violations of Academic Integrity and Consequences

The certain types of violations of academic integrity, the procedure for responding to them and the procedure for liability are determined by this Code.

Article 9. Prevention of Violations of Academic Integrity

1. The University shall act with the means at its disposal to eliminate any violations of academic integrity through fair mechanisms of awareness-raising, training and response to individual cases.
2. In order to prevent violations of academic integrity, the University shall be obliged to familiarize the University staff with the mechanisms for protecting academic integrity in force at the University and the relevant Research Ethics Code and Regulations.

Article 10. Types of Violations of Academic Integrity

For the purposes of this Code, the types of violations of academic integrity are: a. Plagiarism;

- b. Compilation;
- c. Fabrication/falsification;
- d. Destruction of scientific results.

Chapter III. Procedure for responding to forms of academic integrity violations by personnel

Article 11. Principles of response to forms of violation of academic integrity

Response to violations of academic integrity and imposition of appropriate responsibility shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure established by this Code, based on the principles of proportionality, impartiality, investigation of the circumstances of the case and justice.

Article 12. Grounds for initiating disciplinary proceedings due to violation of academic integrity by personnel

The grounds for initiating disciplinary proceedings due to violation of academic integrity by personnel are:

- a. A statement submitted by an interested person on the fact of violation of academic integrity by university personnel, accompanied by sufficient evidence;
- b. Discovery of the fact of violation of academic integrity by university personnel.

Article 13. Statement on violation of academic integrity by personnel

1. A statement on the fact of violation of academic integrity by university personnel may be submitted by both academic, invited and administrative personnel of the university, as well as any interested person. A statement on violation of academic integrity may concern both the formal processes for determining academic integrity (evaluation by a colleague, use of an electronic program that detects similarities), as well as suspicious actions of personnel discovered outside of formal processes.

2. The content of the statement on violation of academic integrity and information about the applicant are confidential. The Commission shall consider the statement on violation of academic integrity fairly, objectively and impartially and shall inform the interested parties of the results of the consideration. The Commission shall review the application for violation of academic integrity, the evidence attached to it, relevant research data, publications, and other materials no later than 5 calendar days from its registration (removal of the defect) and, if there are sufficient grounds, shall determine the composition of the Commission for Determining Violation of Academic Integrity (hereinafter referred to as the "Commission"), which shall be submitted to the Rector of the University for approval.

3. Within 3 calendar days from the submission of the Commission, the Commission for Determining Violation of Academic Integrity shall be established by order of the Rector of the University. The initiation of disciplinary proceedings against a person does not limit his/her right to participate in the academic activities, teaching, and research processes of the university, except in cases where his/her participation poses a threat to the rights, life, health, property, safety, business reputation, and prestige of other persons.

Article 14. Research Ethics Commission

1. The Commission is a permanent collegial body of the University, which, when conducting its activities, is guided by the legislation of Georgia, the University Statute, this Code and other internal legal acts in force at the University. The Commission is guided in its activities by the principles of legality, collegiality, equality, confidentiality, integrity and independence.

2. The purpose of the Commission is to promote the protection and development of the principles of academic integrity and research ethics at the University. The Commission, within the framework of the powers granted by this Code and other legal acts of the University:

- a. Provides advice and instructions to the University staff and doctoral students on issues related to academic integrity and research ethics;
- b. Develops guidelines on research ethics and promotes awareness among researchers about research ethics standards and academic integrity;
- c. Provides a conclusion on the compliance of research conducted on behalf of the University with existing ethical standards in appropriate cases;
- d. Considers ethical issues related to research projects in order to comply with research ethics principles.

3. The Commission consists of 3 permanent members. The composition of the Commission is approved by the Rector of the University. Accordingly, the Commission is accountable to the Rector of the University. The Commission is headed by a Chairman, who signs and submits to the Rector of the University the decisions made at the Commission meeting, including, if necessary, the establishment of a Commission to determine violations of academic integrity.

1 means the destruction of data or records obtained by oneself or others to prevent the disclosure of violations of the sponsor's agreement, university legal acts, internal regulations, and professional or disciplinary standards.

4. If necessary, when considering the issue of academic integrity, by decision of the University Rector, the Commission may include the Dean of the Faculty, the Head of the Educational Program, as well as academic and invited personnel with a Doctoral degree in the relevant field/discipline.

Article 15. Academic Integrity Commission Academic

1. The academic integrity commission shall consist of persons with a doctorate in the relevant field (field, specialty) or an equivalent academic degree. The members of the commission shall have experience in research activities and high qualifications in the given field of research. The commission shall, as a rule, consist of at least 5 members. The number of members of the commission shall be odd. The work of the commission shall be confidential. The commission session shall be closed. The commission shall be authorized if at least 2/3 of the commission members attend the commission session.

2. The first session of the commission shall be scheduled no later than 5 working days after the approval of the commission. The Commission shall recognize its authority at its first meeting and shall elect a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretary by open ballot.

Article 16. Impartial Resolution of Cases by the Commission

The Commission shall exercise its authority impartially. The composition of the Commission shall exclude any conflict of interest.

Article 17. Rights and Obligations of the Commission

1. The Commission has the right, if necessary, to request the applicant to submit additional written information on the circumstances expressing the content of the violation. The applicant is obliged to submit additional written information to the Commission, which must clearly reflect the content of the violation, substantive comparisons and their analysis. Failure to submit information is grounds for terminating the proceedings on the submitted application.

2. If necessary, in order to resolve a specific issue, the Commission has the right to invite a specialist/expert in the relevant field. The Commission has the right to invite the applicant to a session of the Commission at any stage of the ongoing proceedings and, if necessary, to request written and verbal explanations from him on the issues raised during the work of the Commission. At the session of the Commission, the applicant must limit himself only to describing the circumstances expressing the content of the violation and substantiating it.

3. The applicant does not have the right to request the application of a specific sanction against the person who may have committed the violation. The Commission has the right, at any stage of the ongoing proceedings, to invite other persons to the Commission session who may have information about the facts mentioned in the application. The Commission is obliged, at any stage of the ongoing proceedings, to invite the person who may have committed the violation(s) specified in the application to the Commission session. The person who may have committed the violation(s) specified in the application has the right to provide the Commission with information and evidence at his/her disposal to defend his/her position.

Article 18. Commission Conclusion

1. The Commission shall make a decision, which shall be reflected in the Commission Conclusion.

2. The Commission Conclusion shall enter into force if it is signed by at least 3/4 of the Commission members. A member of the Commission with a dissenting opinion shall be obliged to submit a dissenting opinion to the Commission in writing within 2 calendar days from the date of the conclusion, which shall be attached to the Commission Conclusion and shall be an integral part of the Commission Conclusion. The Commission Conclusion shall be sent to the University Research Ethics Commission for a relevant decision.

Article 19. Procedure for Decision-Making by the Commission

1. The decision shall be made by a majority of the members of the University Research Ethics Commission based on the results of the proceedings conducted in connection with the application for violation of academic integrity.

2. When making a decision, the Commission shall be guided by the principles of impartiality, objectivity, and equality of parties. The decision of the Commission must be substantiated and based on the Commission's

conclusion, other documents in the case file, the factual circumstances surrounding the case and relevant evidence. All evidence that is the basis for disciplinary proceedings must be properly examined by the Commission. A member of the Commission who disagrees with the Commission's decision has the right to express a different opinion, which is reflected in the minutes of the Commission's meeting.

3. In the event of an equal distribution of votes among the members of the Commission, the Chairman of the Commission shall have the casting vote.

4. The minutes of the meeting shall be drawn up on the results of the Commission's meeting, which shall be signed by the Chairman of the Commission (in his absence - the Deputy Chairman) and the Secretary.

Article 20. Decision made by the Commission

1. Based on the results of the proceedings conducted in connection with the application for violation of academic integrity, the Research Ethics Commission has the right to make one of the following decisions:

- a. On accepting the conclusion of the Commission in the form of information (certificate) on the absence of a fact of violation of academic integrity;
- b. On dismissing the violator (employee) from the position held due to the establishment of the fact of plagiarism;
- c. On dismissing the violator (employee) from the position held due to the establishment of the fact of compilation, fabrication/falsification, destruction of scientific results or on applying another disciplinary measure provided for by this Code to the violator (employee).

2. When applying disciplinary measures, the Commission must adhere to the principles of fairness, objectivity, proportionality and equality between the imposed measure and the committed misconduct.

3. The decision made by the Commission may be appealed within 7 working days from its adoption.

4. Within 3 working days from the expiration of the appeal period, the conclusion is sent to the Rector of the University and the person against whom disciplinary proceedings were conducted.

Article 21. Appealing a decision made by the Commission

1. A person has the right to appeal a decision made by the Commission on the application of disciplinary liability in accordance with the procedure established by this Article.

2. If a person disagrees with the decision made by the Commission, he or she has the right to apply in writing to the Academic Council of the University within 5 calendar days from the date of the decision and appeal the decision.

3. The complaint must be substantiated. When considering a complaint by the Academic Council of the University, a conflict of interest must be taken into account. A member of the Academic Council who is also a member of the Ethics Commission may not participate in the consideration of the issue.

4. When considering a complaint by the Academic Council of the University, a person has the right to attend the session and present his or her own opinions and evidence. 5. Based on the results of the consideration of the complaint, the University Representative Council has the right to make one of the following decisions:

- a. On leaving the decision made by the Research Ethics Commission in force;
- B. On applying other disciplinary measures provided for by this Code to the violator (employee).

5. The decision made by the Academic Council shall be sent to the Rector of the University and the person against whom disciplinary proceedings were conducted within 3 calendar days from the date of the decision.

Article 22. Enforcement of the decision made by the Commission or the Academic Council

1. In case of confirmation of a violation of academic integrity, based on the decision made by the Commission, and in case of appeal by the Academic Council of the University, the Rector of the University, within 5 calendar days from the date of the relevant decision, shall make a decision on the application of disciplinary measures against the person.

2. The decision of the Rector on the application of disciplinary measures is final and may be appealed in court in accordance with the procedure established by the applicable legislation.

Article 23. Disciplinary Measures

The following disciplinary measures may be taken by the Rector of the University against the University personnel:

- a. Warning;
- b. Reprimand;
- c. Suspension of the University internal grant agreement (if any); d. Withholding of wages for no more than ten working days;
- e. Dismissal/termination of employment contract.

In the event of a violation of academic integrity, the person is prohibited from publishing academic work on behalf of the university.

Article 24. Final Provisions

The Code may be adopted, repealed, amended, and supplemented by a decision of the Academic Council.

